

Message Text

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15

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 484

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMCONSUL MONTREAL

UNCLAS QUEBEC 113

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, CA

SUBJECT: DEVELOPING CONFRONTATION BETWEEN QUEBEC GOVERNMENT
AND QUEBEC FEDERATION OF LABOR.

1.SUMMARY:

QUEBEC GOVERNMENT IS GOING AHEAD WITH LEGISLATIVE
IMPLEMENTATION OF CLICHE REPORT AND QFL IS PREPARING A SHOW
OF LABOR SOLIDARITY IN OPPOSITION TO THIS GOVERNMENT ACTION.
PRATT WHINEY PLANT VIOLENCE ILLUSTRATES HARD LINE BEING
TAKEN BY BOTH SIDES OVER ISSUES IN POST-CLICHE POWER STRUGGLE.
WE THINK QUEBEC GOVERNMENT IS WILLINGLY MOVING INTO
CONFRONTATION WITH QFL FOR CONTROL OF CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY
AND EXPECTING THAT PUBLIC AND RANK AND FILE LABOR OPINION
IN POST-CLICHE COMMISSION ATMOSPHERE WILL RESULT IN GENERAL
ACCEPTANCE OF GOVERNMENT'S HARD LINE. IT LOOKS AT THIS TIME
AS IF GOQ HOLDS STRONG POSITION. LABOR PARTICIPATION IN
QFL PROPOSED OPEN QUOTES GENERAL STRIKE CLOSED QUOTES NEXT
WEDNESDAY SHOULD TEST WIDELY-HELD THEORY THAT RANK-AND-FILE
NOT BEHIND QFL LEADERS. END SUMMARY.

2. AS OF MAY 16, 1975 QUEBEC NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WAS PREPARING
TO PASS THE TWO LAWS (MONTREAL 855) DRAFTED TO EXECUTE TWO
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OF THE MAJOR CLICHE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS TO DEAL WITH

VIOLENCE AND CORRUPTION IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY OF QUEBEC PROVINCE. ON MAY 15, QUEBEC FEDERATION OF LABOR ANNOUNCED A WORK STOPPAGE OR OPEN QUOTES DAY OF STUDY CLOSED QUOTES ON WEDNESDAY MAY 21 UNLESS THE PRATT WHITNEY (UNITED AIRCRAFT STRIKE) IS SETTLED BY THAT TIME.

3. THE PRATT WHITNEY PLANT VIOLENCE MAY 12, SUBSEQUENT CHARGES OF UNION OPEN QUOTES GOON SQUAD CLOSED QUOTES ACTIVITY TO FORCE WORKERS OFF CONSTRUCTION SITES AND THE INSTITUTION OF EXTRAORDINARY POLICE SURVEILLANCE OF SUCH SITES ILLUSTRATE THE TOUGH POSTURE BEING ASSUMED BY THE TWO PROTAGONISTS, THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT AND THE QUEBEC FEDERATION OF LABOR.

4. IN ESSENCE THE CLICHE COMMISSION APPOINTED BY BOURASSA TO INVESTIGATE ORGANIZED LABOR'S HOLD IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY DOCUMENTED AND DRAMATIZED QFL'S INVOLVEMENT IN VIOLENCE AND CORRUPTION BUT ALSO CRITICIZED THE QUEBEC GOVERNMENT FOR FAILING TO ENFORCE THE LAWS. WE SUGGESTED IN OUR A-6, FEBRUARY 10, 1975 THAT BOURASSA MIGHT RESORT MORE TO THE OPEN QUOTES SWORD CLOSED QUOTES IN DEALING WITH LABOR IN 1975. BY MOVING QUICKLY AND EFFECTIVELY TO ADOPT THE REMEDIES PROPOSED BY THE CLICHE COMMISSION, BOURASSA APPARENTLY INTENDS TO FIGHT THE QFL ON TERRAIN MOST ADVANTAGEOUS TO THE GOVERNMENT. IN THIS WAY HE COULD RESPOND TO PUBLIC REVULSION AT THE ABUSES CLICHE EXPOSED, BREAK THE HOLD OF THE QFL IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY AND LIQUIDATE THE CHARGES THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAD EARLIER FAILED ANDXOR NEGLECTED TO ENFORCE THE LAW IN THE INDUSTRY.

5. BY THREATENING WHAT WOULD REALLY BE A GENERAL STRIKE AGAINST EXECUTION OF THE CLICHE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS, QFL APPARENTLY HOPES TO DEMONSTRATE THE SOLIDARITY OF ITS SOME 300,000 MEMBERS AND PERHAPS OF OTHER ELEMENTS OF LABOR AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT'S LINE OF ACTION.

6. COMMENT: BOTH QUEBEC GOVERNMENT AND QFL ARE MOVING, THE GOVERNMENT WILLINGLY, WE THINK, INTO A CONFRONTATION OVER WHICH OF THEM IS GOING TO CONTROL THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY (AND WHOLE LABOR, IF NOT POLITICAL, AMBIANCE).
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GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO BE COUNTING ON RELUCTANCE OF UNION MEMBERS TO GO ALONG WITH A TOUGH QFL LINE AGAINST THE CLICHE RECOMMENDATIONS AND ON GENERAL PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF A STRONG GOVERNMENT LINE OF ACTION. PROPOSED GENERAL STRIKE SHOULD GIVE FIRST READING OF EXTENT MASS RANK-AND-FILE SUPPORT FOR UNION LEADERS.

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